In the Claims:

1. (currently amended) A splice for connecting thin-walled components to each other, said splice comprising a first end portion of a structural component, a second end portion of a further structural component, an overlapping contact surface area between said first and second end portions, at least one fatigue critical row (6) of rivets subject to dynamic loads and passing through said first and second end portions and through said overlapping contact surface area, a further row (7) of rivets extending between an end portion edge (4A) and said at least one fatigue critical row of rivets, said further row (7) of rivets comprising rivets holding said first and second end portions together in a direction perpendicularly to said overlapping contact surface area, said ~~second~~ further row (7) of rivets comprising ~~rivets~~ rivet shafts (10, 16), and a gap providing play (at 11, 12, 15) between each of said rivet shafts and any one of said first and second end portions for permitting a relative motion of said first and second end portions in a direction parallel to said overlapping contact surface area for reducing crack formation and crack propagation and for relieving stress from said fatigue critical row (6) of rivets.

2. (currently amended) The splice of claim 1, wherein said ~~second~~ further row of rivets comprises rivets each respectively including ~~said holding means in the form of~~

a rivet head, a respective one of said rivet ~~shaft,~~ shafts, and a rivet closure for providing a positive interlocking force in a direction parallel to a central axis (9) of said rivet shaft and for further providing a slidable fit in said direction parallel to said overlapping contact surface area, said positive interlocking force providing friction in said overlapping contact surface area.

3. (currently amended) The splice of claim 2, wherein said rivet shaft comprises a first shaft section with a first shaft diameter fitting snugly into a first rivet hole in one of said first and second end portions, and a second shaft section having a second diameter smaller than said first shaft diameter, said second smaller shaft diameter providing [[a]] said gap (12) between said second shaft section and a wall of a second rivet hole in the other end portion of said first and second end portions for permitting said ~~limited~~ relative motion.

4. (currently amended) The splice of claim 2, wherein said rivet shaft comprises a uniform shaft diameter between said rivet head and said rivet closure, said first end portion having a first rivet hole with a hole diameter providing a snug fit between a wall of said first rivet hole and said rivet shaft, said second end portion having a second rivet hole with a hole diameter larger than said uniform shaft diameter thereby providing [[a]] said gap (12) between said

rivet shaft and a wall of said second rivet hole for permitting said ~~limited~~ relative motion.

5. (original) The splice of claim 3, comprising a press-fit or interference fit between said first shaft diameter and a wall of said first rivet hole.

6. (original) The splice of claim 4, comprising a press-fit or interference fit between said rivet shaft and a wall of said first rivet hole.

7. (original) The splice of claim 2, wherein said rivet shaft comprises a shaft shoulder (16) for clamping one of said first and second sheet metal end portions.

8. (previously presented) The splice of claim 2, wherein said rivet shaft has such an axial shaft length that a defined clamping force providing friction in said splice is applied to said first and second sheet metal end portions when said rivet is set.

9. (original) The splice of claim 2, wherein said rivet shaft has a threaded shaft end, and wherein said rivet closure comprises a closure ring or collar with an internal threading cooperating with said threaded shaft end for applying an adjustable clamping force to said first and second sheet metal end portions.

10. (currently amended) The splice of claim 2, wherein each of said rivets in said ~~second~~ further row of rivets comprises a locking collar.

11. (previously presented) The splice of claim 2, wherein said first and second end portions comprise an upper sheet metal end portion and a lower sheet metal end portion, said upper sheet metal end portion comprising a recess (20) for receiving said rivet head.

12. (previously presented) The splice of claim 1, wherein said further row (7) of rivets extends directly next to said end portion edge (4A) and in parallel to said at least one fatigue critical row (6) of rivets that is subject to dynamic loads, whereby said end portion edge (4A), said fatigue critical row (6) and said further row (7) extend in parallel to one another.

13. (currently amended) The splice of claim 1, wherein said gap providing play is positioned between said rivet shaft and that end portion of said first and second end portions which forms an upper end portion.

[REMARKS CONTINUE ON NEXT PAGE]